

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 24

March 4, 1997, 5:14 pm
Page S-1920 Temp. Record

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT/Rejection

SUBJECT: A Resolution Proposing a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution of the United States . . . S.J. Res. 1. Passage.

ACTION: JOINT RESOLUTION DEFEATED, 66-34

SYNOPSIS: S.J. Res. 1, a resolution proposing a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution, is virtually identical to the balanced budget constitutional amendment that was considered in the previous two Congresses by the Senate (see 103d Congress, second session, vote Nos. 47-48, 104th Congress, first session, vote Nos. 62-63 and 65-98, and 104th Congress, second session, vote No. 158). The resolution will propose the following article as an amendment to the Constitution, to be valid if ratified by three-fourths of the State legislatures within 7 years of its approval by Congress:

- Section 1. Total outlays for any fiscal year shall not exceed total receipts for that fiscal year, unless three-fifths of the whole number of each House of Congress shall provide by law for a specific excess of outlays over receipts by a rollcall vote.
- Section 2. The limit on the debt of the United States held by the public shall not be increased, unless three-fifths of the whole number of each House shall provide by law for such an increase by a rollcall vote.
- Section 3. Prior to each fiscal year, the President shall transmit to the Congress a proposed budget for the United States Government for that fiscal year, in which total outlays do not exceed total receipts.
- Section 4. No bill to increase revenue shall become law unless approved by a majority of the whole number of each House by a rollcall vote.
- Section 5. The Congress may waive the provisions of this article for any fiscal year in which a declaration of war is in effect. The provisions of this article may be waived for any fiscal year in which the United States is engaged in military conflict which causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security and is so declared by a joint resolution, adopted by a majority of the whole number of each House, which becomes law.
- Section 6. The Congress shall enforce and implement this article by appropriate legislation, which may rely on estimates of outlays and receipts.

(See other side)

YEAS (66)			NAYS (34)		NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (55 or 100%)	Democrats (11 or 24%)		Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (34 or 76%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Hutchinson	Baucus	Akaka	Kennedy		
Allard	Hutchison	Biden	Bingaman	Kerrey		
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Breaux	Boxer	Kerry		
Bennett	Jeffords	Bryan	Bumpers	Lautenberg		
Bond	Kempthorne	Cleland	Byrd	Leahy		
Brownback	Kyl	Graham	Conrad	Levin		
Burns	Lott	Harkin	Daschle	Lieberman		
Campbell	Lugar	Kohl	Dodd	Mikulski		
Chafee	Mack	Landrieu	Dorgan	Moynihan		
Coats	McCain	Moseley-Braun	Durbin	Murray		
Cochran	McConnell	Robb	Feingold	Reed		
Collins	Murkowski		Feinstein	Reid		
Coverdell	Nickles		Ford	Rockefeller		
Craig	Roberts		Glenn	Sarbanes		
D'Amato	Roth		Hollings	Torricelli		
DeWine	Santorum		Inouye	Wellstone		
Domenici	Sessions		Johnson	Wyden		
Enzi	Shelby					
Faircloth	Smith, Bob					
Frist	Smith, Gordon					
Gorton	Snowe					
Gramm	Specter					
Grams	Stevens					
Grassley	Thomas					
Gregg	Thompson					
Hagel	Thurmond					
Hatch	Warner					
Helms						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

- Section 7. Total receipts shall include all receipts of the United States Government except those derived from borrowing. Total outlays shall include all outlays of the United States Government except for those for repayment of debt principal.

- Section 8. This article shall take effect beginning with fiscal year 2002 or with the second fiscal year beginning after its ratification, whichever is later.

NOTE: A two-thirds majority vote of Members present and voting in both Houses of Congress is required to pass a proposal to amend the Constitution. (Thus, if all Senators vote, 67 votes are required in the Senate.) If a proposal passes, then Congress must submit that proposal to the States for ratification. Congress may either ask the States to call conventions to ratify the proposal, or, alternatively, ask the States' legislatures to approve the measure. If three-fourths of the States approve a proposal, it becomes part of the Constitution.

Those favoring final passage contended:

Argument 1:

H.J. Res. 1 will propose a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. This structural change to our Government is long overdue. For the past 6 decades, in good years and bad, Congress and the Executive Branch have abandoned the tacit constitutional principle that budgets should be balanced. The Federal Government has gone on a deficit spending spree, amassing a crushing debt burden for future generations to pay. The debt also causes considerable economic hardship now, and all Americans, especially the elderly because they depend on Social Security and Medicare, will endure immense misery if we allow our deficit spending to drive us into bankruptcy. The basic unsustainability of this reckless behavior has been apparent for years, yet every attempt to rein in the Federal Government's profligacy has failed. Some blame Congress, others blame the President, but all are to blame, and pointing at each other with dirty fingers will not help. We believe we are witnessing a systemic failure that works to preclude responsible budgeting. We need the systemic solution offered by this constitutional amendment.

This debate antedates our current fiscal crisis; in fact, it goes back to the drafting of our Constitution. The argument was raised that unless the Constitution clearly limited the ability of the Federal Government to borrow from future generations, a time would come when the legislature would find that it could meet the demands for greater spending and lower taxes by borrowing money from as yet unborn, and thus not voting, generations to pay. Most of the framers were students of history, and were aware that the Achilles' heel of democracy has always been deficit spending. They knew that the average length of survival for democracies is 200 years, and they knew that democracies usually fall because of deficit spending. Consequently, many of the Constitution's framers argued for a specific prohibition on borrowing. The most ardent opponent of deficit spending was Thomas Jefferson. In his words, "The question whether one generation has the right to bind another by the deficit it imposes is a question of such consequence as to place it among the fundamental principles of government. We should consider ourselves unauthorized to saddle posterity with our debts, and morally bound to pay them ourselves." This argument did not hold sway, not out of any disagreement with the principle, but because a majority of the Framers felt that the limited size and enumerated powers of government, the limits on the money supply created by a gold standard, the moral imperative of the "unwritten Constitution," the ability of Senators who were not directly elected and who had 6-year terms to resist public pressure to spend, and the House's exclusive power to originate bills raising revenue would act to ensure that the United States would not destroy itself with debt.

For 150 years they were right. However, starting with the Great Depression of the 1930's, the restraints on deficit spending began to fail. Until that time, Congress and the President found it easier to say "no" to requests for spending because of the common view that the size and the scope of government were strictly limited by the expressed, literal declaration of the powers in the Constitution, and by U.S. monetary policy which was then anchored in the gold standard. However, the desperation of the American people and the willingness to experiment by elected officials changed Americans' view of their central government. Deficits were proclaimed a beneficial fiscal tool, to be used for the Keynesian purpose of combating economic downturns, and, more importantly, the perceived role of the Government became both more expansive and less defined. (The efficacy of spending excessively to moderate the business cycle has been called into sharp question in the past couple of decades because for the past 50 years it has failed. In examining the history of countercyclical economic policies, economists have found that the lag-time between the enactment of stimulus measures and the implementation of those measures is so great that they have never gone into effect until after the economy has already recovered. Even Lord Keynes, the father of countercyclical policy, conceded this fact before his death.)

In the 1960's the Federal Government began to deficit spend solely to avoid making hard budgetary choices. The slip had been gradual to this point, but a rapid expansion in the demands on the Federal Government led to an explosion in new spending. Not surprisingly, there was not a concomitant demand for new taxation, and, with the tolerance that had been building for debt and deficit spending, deficits began a rapid exponential climb. Members and Presidents have been alarmed by the increased spending, and have attempted numerous legislative fixes, including Gramm-Rudman-Hollings I, Gramm-Rudman-Hollings II, tax hikes, rescissions, freezes, and spending caps. None has solved the structural problem. When these fixes got too tough, they were simply abandoned or ignored. The public wants increased spending, and it does not want greater taxes. Majority rule, through the ballot box, has upset the original constitutional principle that a transient majority has no right to burden posterity with debt.

No end is in sight to this continued excessive spending. Democrat, Republican, and bipartisan solutions have been attempted.

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In 1993 President Clinton and Democrats in Congress passed a bill to reduce the planned deficits. (This package did not receive Republican support because it passed the largest tax hike in history without making any immediate spending cuts except in defense programs. It only proposed that in the distant future some domestic spending cuts would be made. This fix was intended to create a dent in the projected deficits, but the fact that it only aspired to a partial solution is an indication that the problem is approaching the point that it cannot be fixed--for the first time, a "fix" was enacted that conceded long-term insolvency.) In 1995, Republicans took over Congress and passed a plan to balance the budget by 2002 that restrained entitlement spending and cut taxes, but President Clinton vetoed it. Then, after extremely contentious and lengthy debates with the White House, Republicans managed to enact some spending cuts, eliminate some programs, and reform welfare. Bipartisan balanced budget plans were also put together by the 104th Congress, but President Clinton refused to back any of those honest plans.

Some Senators, from ignorance or blind wishful thinking, believe that this last 4-year history shows that progress is being made and that the country will soon stop deficit spending. They are correct in saying that the deficit has been lower in the past few years, but that fact is nothing about which to brag. The deficit had risen enormously in the last years of the Bush presidency in order to pay off the Savings and Loan disaster (which was a bipartisan failure unrelated to the structural problem of deficit spending); once that debacle was paid for the deficit plunged. With that cost taken out, the improvement that came from the Democrats' tax hikes in the 103rd Congress and the Republicans' spending cuts in the 104th Congress is much more modest. Further, even if the Republican budget or one of the bipartisan budgets had been enacted, the relief would have been temporary. A statutory agreement can only last until the next vote. In the past, whenever Congress and the President have found that budget agreements from earlier years demanded that they make tough budgetary choices, they have abandoned those earlier agreements rather than make those choices. Every year the compounding deficit is making those budget choices harder because interest payments are consuming an ever-larger share of revenues. All that has been accomplished in the last 4 years is a slight slowing in the rate at which those future decisions are getting harder. Further, even if a statutory plan to balance the budget were adopted and were adhered to until the budget reached balance, we still believe the benefit would be fleeting. We have deficits because Americans elect politicians who promise to spend money on them. Those who promise the most get elected, and those who deliver the most get reelected.

If anyone thinks that the decisions are going to get easier because President Clinton agreed last year that the budget should be balanced by 2002, then he or she has not looked at his latest budget submission. President Clinton has apparently decided that the best way to balance the budget is to increase spending and to increase the deficit for the next few years, and then to cut it and increase taxes in years 4 and 5 (which is convenient, seeing as how he will only be President for a few months in year 4 and will not be President at all in year 5). President Clinton's plan is for someone else to make the hard choices--he wants to increase spending. In fact, according to the latest Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate, 98.5 percent of the unspecified savings that President Clinton says are in his budget are in the last 2 years. The deficit in 1996 was \$107 billion, in 1997 it is forecast that it will be \$116 billion, for 1998 President Clinton has asked for a deficit of \$145 billion, for 1999 he has asked for a deficit of \$142 billion, and for 2000 he wants Congress to spend \$135 billion more than it collects in taxes. All of that increased deficit spending will come about because the President wants to create six new entitlement programs and to increase Federal outlays by \$827 billion over the next 5 years. Even worse, the CBO tells us that the President's budget, as unrealistic as it is, will not balance even if a future Congress and President slash spending and raise taxes as he plans on them doing. According to the CBO, the President's plan will still be out of balance by \$69 billion in 2002. The liberal opponents of this constitutional amendment keep talking about how all that is needed is courage, yet they have had nothing but praise for President Clinton's budget, which is a profile in cowardice.

Clearly the problem has not been solved. Throughout this debate we have kept on the Senate floor an 8-foot high stack of the previous 28 years' budgets, all of which ran deficits. If we went back even farther, we could show a stack for the last 66 years in which only 8 of the budgets were balanced. After deficit spending for every one of the last 28 years, and after repeated statutory failures to put our fiscal house in order, we believe the light of experience shows that it is irrational to believe Congress will suddenly, and forevermore, start balancing the budget. Congress did not have to run a deficit in any one of those years; it could not stop itself.

Most of the deficit spending in the past 30 years has been on middle Americans, the voters. Many Americans are under the impression that foreign aid, welfare, and/or defense spending is to blame, but the real growth has been in entitlements. In particular, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Federal civilian retirement, and military retirement have grown rapidly. Those programs plus interest comprised 24 percent of our budget in 1963, in 1993 they comprised 56 percent, and, if present trends continue, they will consume all revenues collected in just 15 years. Defense spending has been roughly halved in the last 30 years, and domestic spending on other programs has declined slightly. The problem has been and continues to be in these so-called entitlements; Americans expect their Government to provide this money, but they are not willing to pay the full cost of providing it. This has caused the debt to rise, and has therefore made the cost of servicing the debt rise. Gross interest payments on the debt this year are the second largest budget item at \$360 billion. Only Social Security, barely, consumes more money. More than 15 percent of our budget is wasted paying interest costs on our earlier borrowing.

All of this debt is mortgaging our children's future. Every child born today is born with a share of the debt; which currently stands at \$20,000 per person. When we debated this amendment 2 years ago, that burden was \$18,500. We do not call that progress. That \$20,000 in debt is just the tip of the iceberg. If present trends continue, a child born today will also have to pay \$187,000 in income

taxes during his or her lifetime just to pay interest on the public debt, and, for all taxes, will have to pay 82 percent of all the income he or she ever earns (this 82-percent figure is from the Clinton Administration's Office of Management and Budget, and is the most optimistic we could find; other estimates predict higher lifetime tax rates). No one, of course, will ever pay that much in taxes. These projected tax rates do not show that our children are going to be taxed unmercifully; they show something worse--that our projected spending is unsustainable and that our children are being given a country that will be unable to avoid bankruptcy.

The burden is not just on future generations. The debt is so large, \$5.3 trillion (by the end of the year it will be \$5.4 trillion), that it is seriously harming standards of living now. For instance, according to the New York Federal Reserve Bank, deficit spending between the years 1978 and 1988 reduced the growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 5 percent. The Congressional Budget Office informs us that each percentage point of growth adds 600,000, so we therefore lost 3 million jobs due to deficit spending in just those 10 years. Because of our continued deficit spending, the average cost of a home is \$37,000 higher than it should be, the cost of a student loan is \$2,000 greater, and the cost of a car is \$1,000 greater. The cost of servicing the debt is one of the principle reasons the baby boom generation pays enormously high tax rates compared to previous generations, and the drag deficit spending places on the economy is one of the reasons that real per hour wages have only inched up one-third of 1 percent annually over the past 4 years. The debt is helping make the one-earner middle-class family extinct--one-third of all men between the ages of 25 and 34 make less each year than is required to keep the average family of four above the poverty level.

Additionally, for the Nation, all Americans should be concerned that the percentage of the debt held by the public that is held by foreigners is at 27 percent and is growing. Last year, more than \$67 billion in interest payments were made to foreign creditors. Third-world nations have often run themselves into the ground with deficit spending, and have then had to follow the dictates of their rich foreign creditors. The United States is in increasing danger of getting itself into such great debt that it will similarly have to take orders from foreign lenders in return for help in restructuring its debt.

Obviously it will be impossible to continue on this course. Even if we manage to muddle along for awhile by keeping the rate of growth in the economy ahead of the rate of growth in the debt, we will not be able to provide for the Nation's needs if nearly every penny in revenue is spent on interest payments and entitlement transfer payments. Those Senators who proclaim themselves to be liberals should be leading the fight for the passage of this amendment because without it every Federal social program in the country will be nonexistent within a few years. Those programs are already disappearing; liberals who think they are defending social program spending by opposing this amendment are thus really signing its death warrant.

Those Senators who insist we already have the authority to behave responsibly totally misunderstand the purpose of this amendment. The amendment is not to give us the right to balance the budget; it is to take away the right we have assumed, contrary to original intent, to amass a crushing debt for our kids and grandkids to pay. This amendment is to stop fiscal child abuse. Our colleagues tell us, year after year, not to worry because the abusers have the option of stopping themselves at any time; we, however, do not think fiscal child abuse is an option that should exist. Senators need to face reality. Our political system promotes fiscal irresponsibility. We therefore need a structural change. We need to approve this constitutional amendment to balance the budget.

This amendment will help perfect representative democracy. It will put the general public interest in fiscal responsibility back on a level playing field with the special interests, making it more difficult to borrow and spend. The essence of this amendment is that it will finally restore the principle that the Government should spend no more than the people are willing to pay. It will achieve its ends by demanding accountability from Members and by requiring a broad consensus before the debt may grow.

The amendment will require each year's receipts to match or exceed outlays, unless three-fifths majorities in both Houses agree to deficit spend. Congress will be permitted to rely on estimates of receipts and outlays, but those estimates will be held honest by another provision of the amendment, which will require three-fifths majority votes in both Houses to raise the debt limit. We know that Congress can make reliable estimates, because it has steadily been able to predict within 2 percent its deficit targets for its budgets despite all the unforeseen economic circumstances that have occurred over the years. Thus, in practical terms, Congress will likely build a 2-percent cushion in each budget estimate to avoid having to make later corrections or to raise the debt limit. Additionally, no bill to increase revenue will be enacted unless approved by a majority of Members in each House by rollcall votes. Finally, the President will remain engaged in the budget process by a requirement that he submit a balanced budget proposal each year. This amendment will allow deficit spending, but it will make it far more difficult, and it will not be possible to evade its strictures by changing the law. Unlike any of our previous solutions, which we abandoned by rewriting the law when the choices became too difficult, we will not easily be able to rewrite the Constitution.

During the debate on this constitutional proposal a number of amendments have been offered. Most of them followed the same theme--they asked for exceptions that would have resulted in unlimited deficit spending for one purpose or another. After a month of debate on these matters our colleagues are familiar with the arguments, so there is no point in rehashing them here for each amendment, but one new point needs to be made. If one takes all of the amendments together, each of which received overwhelming support from opponents of this constitutional amendment, one finds that they would have exempted 95 percent of the domestic budget from the balanced budget requirement. Our liberal colleagues idea of "improving" this constitutional amendment is to make it apply to only a tiny portion of the Federal budget, which they could proudly proclaim was balanced, at the same time as they continued bankrupting the country.

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Last Congress we were one vote shy of passing the Balanced Budget Constitutional Amendment. The amendment would have passed overwhelmingly if six Democratic Senators had not switched their votes from the previous year's vote. This time, we have two new Democratic Senators who were House Members and who voted for this very amendment when they were in the House, but who now say they have changed their minds. They voted for this amendment, and they campaigned for the Senate on the solemn promise that they would support the Balanced Budget Constitutional Amendment. Now that they have been elected, though, they say that when they were campaigning in support of the Balanced Budget Amendment they did not mean the particular version they had always voted for before, and which is the only version that has any chance of passing--no, they meant a version with amendments to exempt 95 percent of the domestic budget and a good portion of the rest. These Senators switched their votes after heavy pressure from President Clinton and other Democratic Senators. Because these two new Senators have switched their votes, we will again fall one vote shy of passage. Many Democratic Senators are still supporting this amendment despite the pressure from their party, and we commend their courage. Passing this constitutional amendment should not be a partisan issue, or a conservative or a liberal issue--it should be a matter of principle and common sense.

We need only one vote--we need only one more Senator to show courage and vote to save the United States from bankruptcy. If we do not get that vote we will be back next Congress, and the next, until it passes, because until it passes the debt will continue to grow. All the arguments boil down to one central question: Does the ability of the Federal Government to borrow money from future generations involve decisions of such magnitude that they should not be left to the judgments of transient majorities? We vote that it does.

Argument 2:

We favored some of the amendments that were proposed, such as the Graham/Robb amendment that would have increased the soundness of the Social Security program. Though we are disappointed that those amendments were not adopted, we still firmly support adoption of this constitutional amendment. If it is not passed deficit spending will continue and the Federal Government will go bankrupt and destroy Social Security in the process. Our colleagues who oppose this amendment because of Social Security may mean well, but if they vote against it they will share responsibility for its destruction.

Those opposing final passage contended:

Rarely in all our years in the Senate have we seen a measure so flawed as the one before us today. This amendment will violate the principle of majority rule, violate the separation-of-powers doctrine, encourage budget gimmickry with the Constitution, fail to bring the budget into balance, raid the Social Security trust fund, weaken the economy, and result in massive cuts in assistance to the neediest Americans. Over the course of this debate we have offered numerous amendments to ameliorate the many manifest flaws in this proposed balanced budget amendment, though we never had any hope of making it acceptable. Our intent was not so much to amend S.J. Res. 1 as it was to expose its defects.

The first 182 years of our country's history resulted in an accumulated national debt of just under \$1 trillion. During the past 16 years, that debt has increased to \$5.3 trillion. During the 12 years of the Reagan and Bush Administrations, the national debt quadrupled. In one brief decade, aberrant fiscal policy decisions were made that amassed debt. (Those of us who were here at the time can attest to the fact that there was not great opposition from either party to that deficit spending. Much of that spending was for a defense build up that many experts believe led to the Soviet Union's economic collapse when it tried to match it.)

Though it may or may not have been justified to accumulate so much debt in the 1980s, we must now adopt policy decisions to reduce it. The process was started by former President Bush in the 1990 reconciliation bill (which many believe cost him reelection) and was greatly expanded upon by President Clinton and congressional Democrats in their bold deficit reduction package of 1993. Next came a Republican Congress in 1995. That Republican Congress clashed strongly with the Democratic White House over priorities, but Republicans made progress on their goal of further deficit reduction through spending cuts. The path has not been easy, but progress is clearly being made. At its height, the yearly deficit was \$290 billion; last year it was down to \$107 billion. Further, Senators who are worried that we will return to \$290-billion or more deficits must keep in mind that we only reached that height because the President and Congress made the correct decision to pay off the Savings and Loan disaster quickly. Right now, we are very close to balancing the budget. A couple of changes, such as the correction of the Consumer Price Index formula and a delay in proposed tax cuts, could by themselves balance the budget. We do not need a constitutional amendment. We just need to continue on the present path.

Though passing the Balanced Budget Amendment will not bring any benefit, it will cause considerable harm. The first, and perhaps most serious, flaw in this amendment is that it will for the first time overturn the principle of majority rule. The budget of this Nation and immense economic decisions that relate to that budget could, at the most critical of times, be placed in the hands of a minority. During times of domestic or foreign economic crises, natural disasters, international turmoil, and recessions, which are the times that deficit spending is often necessary, minorities will exercise an undue influence over policy decisions. Decisions having to do with protecting the structure of government or individual rights deserve protection from majority rule, but fiscal policy decisions do not.

This constitutional amendment will also so blur and smudge the historical balance among the three branches that it will render our traditional constitutional structure to a mere shadow of its former clarity. If a deficit exists, the President will have unchecked impoundment powers. He will be able to make across-the-board cuts, rescind particular programs, or mandate that funding in particular States be cut. Constitutionally, Congress could not stop him. Also, the judiciary will become involved in making tax and spending decisions.

After causing this structural damage to the Constitution, this balanced budget amendment will then cause further damage because Members will inevitably attempt to evade its strictures. As evidence, we point to the experiences of the States, most of which have balanced budget amendments. Gimmicks that have been employed by the States to get around their constitutional balanced budget requirements include the creation of off-budget accounts, the postponement of payments to localities and school district suppliers, the delay of tax refunds, the deferment of contributions to pension funds, and the sale of State assets. When Members enact gimmicks to get around the Constitution the American people will become even more contemptuous of them.

One gimmick is already built into the amendment--Social Security surpluses will be used to mask the size of the deficit. The only debt that will be counted under the debt limit is that which is "held by the public." Debt that is owed to the Government, such as debt owed to the Social Security trust fund, will not be counted. Over the next 20 years Social Security will collect \$2 trillion in revenues to pay for the retirement of the "baby boomer" generation. Under this amendment, every penny of that \$2 trillion will be spent to balance the budget instead.

Other gimmicks to evade really balancing the budget will be inevitable because this constitutional amendment expressly provides that it will be permissible to rely on estimates of outlays and receipts in its implementation and enforcement. Members of Congress and Presidents have tended to be optimists in recent years, to put it as politely as possible. They have predicted greater revenues and less expenses than have occurred. Estimates have missed the size of the deficit by tens of billions of dollars. When estimates prove lousy under a balanced budget amendment, Congress will then have to scramble to come up with a three-fifths vote to raise the debt limit, or they will have to find a majority vote to enact a gimmick for an easy way out.

Though we do not expect that this amendment will result in balanced budgets, we do believe it will result in cuts in those programs that do not have well-heeled defenders to stand up for them. Once Social Security (except for its surpluses), defense, and interest on the debt are off the table, the portion of the budget with which we are dealing is rather small. Most of this remaining spending is in the form of State assistance, primarily for social welfare programs. Thus, when cuts are made in this rather small area of the budget, the poor and the disabled will be especially hurt. If our colleagues want to cut childhood immunizations, end Federal educational aid, eliminate the Food Stamp program, and slash home heating assistance, then they should vote for this amendment.

We will not. Public opinion is turning our way. The American people still overwhelmingly support this amendment, as they did the last time we voted on it, but now they also say that it should contain an exemption for Social Security. The Senate was largely created to exercise leadership for the good of the country by withstanding the tides of popular passion; it exercised that leadership nobly and courageously last Congress. The American people are gradually coming to realize how manifestly flawed this proposal really is. Soon they will oppose it. We urge our colleagues to again join us in defeating the Balanced Budget Constitutional Amendment.